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Summary record of the 37th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 12 December 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Park Hae-yun (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Republic of Korea)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 117: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

Agenda item 123: Human resources management (*continued*)

Safety and security of United Nations personnel (A/55/494 and A/55/658)

1. **Mr. Sevan** (United Nations Security Coordinator) said that, only hours earlier in Islamabad, Pakistan, a large group of rejected refugees or asylum-seekers had forced their way into the compound of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and had temporarily taken one person hostage. That was only the most recent of the growing number of incidents that threatened the safety and security of United Nations personnel. Introducing the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/55/494), he noted that staff security significantly affected the ability of United Nations organizations to operate. In the past six months, six staff members had been brutally murdered; all those tragedies could have been avoided. Enhanced security measures in all field operations of the United Nations system were urgently needed, as United Nations personnel had become easy targets for abuse, kidnapping and murder with impunity. Of the 198 civilian staff members killed since January 1992, 177 had been murdered; since January 1994, 242 United Nations personnel had been kidnapped. Civilian staff were sent into high-risk situations with no security training and no communications equipment.

2. It was time to stop hiding behind the argument that the host Governments had the primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel, since such personnel were sometimes sent to areas where there was no governmental authority, where the host Government could hardly protect its own personnel or where vehicles and communications equipment were not available. The situation had become untenable; it seemed that staff members killed in the line of duty were forgotten almost immediately, as were their families, whom the Organization failed to assist in any way.

3. The Secretary-General's report reflected the results of the studies conducted by two internal task forces and an external team of experts and described the shortcomings of the current security management system. It also outlined some of the measures that had been taken and were under consideration to improve staff security, and listed the names of staff members who were detained or missing. All that information made it clear that the General Assembly must take urgent action to provide long-overdue funding for staff security measures. He was very surprised that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) considered the Secretary-General's report unclear, and wondered how many more staff members would have to die before Member States took the issue seriously.

4. In the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator, only eight Professional-level staff members managed and coordinated security arrangements for over 70,000 staff members and dependants at over 150 duty stations. Of those eight posts, only two were funded from the regular budget; the rest were funded by a patchwork of funding sources and organizations. The result was a lack of stability and the Security Coordinator had little control over the individuals assigned to his Office. After the payment of staff costs out of the Office's $600,000 annual budget, only about $200,000 was left for security arrangements; that amounted to some $1,300 per duty station, which would not even pay for round-trip economy-class airfare from New York to most locations. Moreover, the Office's $600,000 budget was only four times the cost of the annual contract for the team of dogs used for security purposes at Headquarters.

5. The Secretary-General was proposing that the Office should consist of 18 Professional staff members and that the post of United Nations Security Coordinator should be established at the Assistant Secretary-General level. That would ensure that, in a rank-oriented organization such as the United Nations, the executive heads would pay due attention to the Security Coordinator's advice. The Secretary-General also proposed that the Office should be funded entirely from the regular budget. That would redress the current situation in which security arrangements could be held hostage to funding whims and in which there was no chain of command.

6. An adequate number of Professional-level field security officers was also critical. Currently, only 60 such officers were assigned to 39 duty stations, whereas some 80 duty stations were considered high-risk. Moreover, the administrative red tape involved in the current inter-agency funding of those posts could result in delays of up to 13 months in deploying field security officers. The Secretary-General proposed that all such posts should be funded from a single, sustainable, centrally managed source; that the officers should be recruited, appraised and managed according to uniform criteria; and that the number of field security officers should be increased to 100.

7. The Secretary-General also proposed that security training should be provided to all staff members before they were deployed, since many humanitarian workers spent more time than military personnel in high-risk situations. Currently, his Office was providing security training at high-risk duty stations using resources from the trust fund for staff security. However, such training should not continue to depend on voluntary contributions. The Organization should also provide training and stress counselling to help staff members to cope with the realities of their work environment.

8. The security management system appeared to have broken down because there was insufficient communication, no chain of command and no accountability. Many duty stations did not even have lists of their staff members. A system of minimum operating security standards should be instituted, which would establish criteria for determining when security concerns warranted the suspension of operations. For example, the Security Council was currently considering a draft resolution on increasing sanctions against Afghanistan, which, if adopted, could put United Nations personnel at risk. The Security Coordinator would then face the dilemma of whether to authorize the continued provision of much-needed humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan or whether to withdraw United Nations personnel from that country in response to security concerns. The lack of communications equipment was another major impediment to security management. Currently, only 34 of the 150 duty stations had round-the-clock communications capability. Moreover, some Member States prohibited or limited the use of communication systems by United Nations organizations.

9. The Secretary-General's report reminded Member States of their primary responsibility for the safety of United Nations personnel and called on them to bring the perpetrators of attacks on such personnel to justice. However, out of 192 cases in which United Nations personnel had been murdered, only three perpetrators had been brought to justice thus far. Member States were also urged to sign and ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

10. It was time to move beyond statements of political will and to approve the funds required to implement the Secretary-General's proposals. The Fifth Committee should demonstrate its commitment to staff security by recommending that the General Assembly should make those funds available immediately. Since the Organization could not afford to lose any more of its staff members to violence, it should either provide adequate funding for staff security or stop sending staff to high-risk areas.

11. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report (A/55/658) on the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/494), said that the information provided in the latter report on security arrangements and coordination at the headquarters of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and in the field did not fully or clearly explain how the United Nations and other partners cooperated to enhance staff security in the field. The Advisory Committee had heard an extensive presentation by the United Nations Security Coordinator, which had confirmed its impression that arrangements in that area were not satisfactory.

12. The Advisory Committee recommended that the eight Professional posts requested for the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator at Headquarters should be approved. Unfortunately, it was not in a position to make a recommendation on the equipment and other requirements just referred to by the representative of the Secretary-General. If funding requests for such requirements had been submitted, the Advisory Committee would have given them due consideration. The Advisory Committee also recommended that the requests for six P-4, four P-3 and 20 local level posts for field security services should be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, for the reasons set forth in paragraphs 13 and 14 of its report. It would revert to that issue once the additional information it had requested had been submitted. Its

recommendations in that connection were not intended to cut costs; in recent times, the Advisory Committee had invariably agreed with most of the Secretary-General's requests for personnel to provide security services in peacekeeping operations. However, in the current case, the information provided was insufficient to enable the Advisory Committee to give an informed opinion on interim support requirements for field security services.

13. After careful consideration, the Advisory Committee had decided that there was no compelling reason to recommend approval of the request for a post at the Assistant Secretary-General level, for the reasons set out in paragraph 11 of its report. It did not share the view that yet another high-level post at Headquarters would enhance the safety and security of staff in the field. While the representative of the Secretary-General had just asserted that the Organization was rank-oriented, the Advisory Committee had not reviewed the Secretary-General's request on the basis of what was required to satisfy the perceived protocol of the United Nations.

14. The Advisory Committee had also considered the role of the regular budget and cost-sharing arrangements (A/55/658, paras. 16 and 17). The Secretary-General's report was rather vague on the question of cost-sharing with respect to the $60 million in regular budget funds he would be requesting for the next biennium to implement the proposals under consideration. The Advisory Committee had been informed that the costs of security coordination and services in the field would be included in the regular budget of the United Nations. The Advisory Committee agreed to that proposal, for the reasons stated in paragraph 17 of its report, but cautioned that the principle of cost-sharing already approved by the General Assembly must be fully respected.

15. **Mr. Sevan** (United Nations Security Coordinator) said that the Secretary-General's report, which had been requested by the General Assembly, had not been submitted merely for informational purposes, but to prompt the Assembly to take action with regard to a serious problem. The expert review of the Organization's current security arrangements had found that those arrangements, as well as his Office's annual budget of $600,000, were abysmally deficient. If the Secretary-General's report was confusing, the reason was that the situation itself was confusing; the Organization's security management system must be put in order. The Secretary-General should have requested such assistance much earlier.

16. With respect to whether or not the Organization was rank-oriented, it was necessary to face facts. To expect the executive head of a United Nations organization to heed the advice of a Security Coordinator at the P-4 or P-5 level was comparable to sending a Third Secretary of a delegation to negotiate with an Ambassador. It was frustrating to be told that proposals for enhancing staff security could not be implemented until the next programme budget had been formulated and adopted, while kidnappings and killings of personnel in the field continued to occur. Not only money, but people's lives, were at stake. He and the entire staff of the Organization felt very strongly that the issue was extremely urgent and could not be postponed.

Agenda item 153: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*) (A/55/650)

17. **Mr. Yeo** (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division) introduced the note by the Secretary-General on reform of the procedure for determining reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment (A/55/650). The note had been requested by the General Assembly in resolution 54/19 B, in which it had decided to convene a post-Phase V Working Group in January or February 2001 to review rates and related issues and had requested the Secretary-General to collect relevant data from Member States and to report on the status of that process as a basis for determining whether the post-Phase V Working Group should be convened. He was pleased to report that, in addition to the 30 Member States listed in paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's note, four more troop-contributing countries (Fiji, India, Tunisia and Zambia) had submitted the necessary data thus far. The data from those 34 countries were broad and representative enough to enable the Working Group to proceed with its analysis. As indicated in paragraph 3 of the note, the Secretary-General proposed to convene the Working Group from 15 to 26 January 2001.

18. **Mr. Chaudry** (Pakistan) said that the submission of data by 34 countries demonstrated the interest of Member States in the important exercise undertaken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/19 B. He looked forward to a productive Working Group session and proposed that the recommendation contained in

paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's note should be approved.

19. The Chairman suggested that the Committee should recommend that the General Assembly should adopt the following draft decision:

"*The General Assembly*,

(a) *Takes note* of the note by the Secretary-General on the reform procedure for determining reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment (A/55/650);

(b) *Decides* to convene a post-Phase V Working Group meeting during the period 15 to 26 January 2001 to conduct a review on the issues itemized in accordance with its resolution 54/19 B of 15 June 2000 and draft resolution A/C.5/55/L.6 adopted by the Fifth Committee on 23 October 2000."

20. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.